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SUBJECT: ACCOUNT OF AN ALLEGED DETENTION BY JAYSH AL-MAHDI

Classified By: DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MICHAEL J. ADLER, FOR REASONS

1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. In an April 6 conversation, Baghdad resident Hussein Muhammed (strictly protect) told PolOff he was kidnapped from his home February 22 by Jaysh-al-Mahdi (JAM) and taken blindfolded to an unknown location where he was physically abused after refusing to admit his Sunni affiliations and the names and locations of other Sunnis in his neighborhood. He claimed to believe that he escaped death when a JAM member, and would-be interrogator, recognized him and ordered that he be set free. Muhammed, who was referred to us by a Sunni Waqf contact, is a Sunni Arab but reportedly lived in the predominantly Shia district of Baghdad Jadida at the time of his abduction. End Summary.

Alleged Kidnapping by Jaysh al-Mahdi

¶2. (C) Hussein Muhammed told PolOff that on February 22 up to ten armed men dressed in black clothing broke down his door and kidnapped him from his house in the predominantly Shia area of Baghdad Jadida (Amin neighborhood). As Muhammed was taken from his house, and beaten, he said he recognized several members of the group, including his grocer and several unemployed residents of the neighborhood who he said were widely known to be JAM members.

¶3. (C) After first being driven to the Al-Sadr Hussaynia in Sadr City, Muhammed said he was transferred to a second location to be interrogated. Before being taken inside the second location, one of his captors placed a piece of paper in his pocket and told him that the paper would help him. Muhammed told PolOff that after he was freed, he pulled out the piece of paper and saw the word "terrorist" written on it.

INTERROGATION AND ABUSE

¶4. (C) Once in the facility, Muhammed said he was taken blindfolded into a room and made to kneel with his face to the ground. An interrogator facing him asked questions while behind him someone waited to beat him with a blunt object. Muhammed said there were at least two other interrogators present during questioning sessions. The principal interrogator accused him of being a terrorist and demanded the names and addresses of other Sunnis in the neighborhood. Muhammed said that despite the severe beatings he received, he continuously denied being Sunni for fear that he would be immediately killed. He was beaten at several intervals, and was at one point hung upside down to be beaten further. Muhammed said that throughout this time, he was able to hear the anguished cries of many others being abused in the same

facility.

¶5. (C) Muhammed told PolOff that a new shift of interrogators eventually arrived to replace the previous group. As he was taken blindfolded before the new team, one of the new interrogators recognized him and ordered that he be released.

After being driven to a police station by his captors who told the police "we don't have anything on him", Mohammed was returned to his neighborhood. During the ride back, the police cautioned that he keep his eyes closed and face down during the duration of the ride, and emphasized to Mohammed that it was not the police who had done this to him.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Muhammed told PolOff that he has left his predominantly Shia neighborhood and is now living with his brother. Though he did not show PolOff his torture marks, he said that it took him a month to recover from his wounds. Muhammed is a mild-mannered and seemingly religious man. Although it is difficult to judge the veracity of his statements, especially without physical proof, we have heard numerous similar stories. This account is notable, because it came directly from an alleged victim, himself, and occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Samarra bombing.
KHALILZAD